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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 04, 2009

Summary: The decision by Swat Taliban and TNSM "rejecting the establishment of 'Darul Qaza' (appellate courts) and appointment of two high court judges as 'Qazis'" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Monday. Sufi Mohammad's remarks that "there is no room for democracy in Shariah" received front page display. All newspapers highlighted reports that the "Swat Taliban beheaded two personnel and resumed armed patrols in the valley." Several major dailies published a Washington Post report that the "Obama administration may announce a new public formula for dual control of the drones that attack suspected terrorist target inside FATA." Foreign Minister Qureshi's statement that a "national consensus against extremism and terrorism is taking shape" received extensive coverage.

All major dailies ran editorials on a host of subjects including the growing threat of extremism in Pakistan, establishment of Darul Qaza, and the President Zardari's visit to the United States. The center-left independent national English daily "Dawn," observed that "if the Pakistan government is guilty of not living up to the basic standards of governance and policymaking, the U.S. government has similarly failed to devise a credible policy towards Pakistan." The Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," noted that the "logic of military action will succeed only if the army stays on and doesn't retreat from the theater of war." The leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang," editorialized that the "national interests necessitate that the experiment of the Nizam-i-Adl must be made successful." End Summary.

News Stories

"Democracy, Sharia Incompatible: Sufi; TNSM, Taliban Reject Darul Qaza" "Dawn" (05/04)

"The Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi and Swat Taliban have rejected the Darul Qaza set up by the NWFP Government and the two judges appointed by it as Qazis, and accused the government of taking unilateral decisions without consulting Maulana Sufi Mohammad. Meanwhile, Swat Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan told newsmen by phone that they would not accept the Darul Qaza which had been set up along with bombing and shelling by planes...."

"Democracy Has No Worth In Sharia, Says Sufi" "The News" (05/04)

"In an interview with the Geo News, Chief of the defunct Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi Maulana Sufi Mohammad says there is no room for democracy in Sharia."

"Taliban Resume Patrolling in Swat" "The News" (05/04)

"The Swat Taliban beheaded two security personnel and resumed armed patrols in the valley, further imperiling the peace deal with the government."

"U.S. To Offer Dual Control Of Drones, Says Report" "Dawn" (05/04)

"The Obama administration may announce a new public formula for dual control of the drones that attack suspected terrorist target inside FATA, The Washington Post reported on Sunday. The newspaper said that U.S. officials were exploring ways to reduce the political strain on the Zardari government caused by U.S. drone attacks on Al Qaeda sanctuaries in the tribal areas. The drone attacks, however, would continue."

"Drone Attacks Backfiring, Congress Told" "The News" (05/04)

"A key advisor to U.S. Army General David Petraeus, who is the head of Central Command, has called for ending the highly controversial and unpopular drone attacks against militant targets on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, saying the strikes are creating more enemies than they eliminate."

"Pakistan Regaining Control In NWFP, Says Robert Gates" "Daily Times" (05/04)

"U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates said on Sunday that Pakistan has started regaining control of parts of NWFP that were recently taken over by the Taliban, and acknowledged the growing recognition in Islamabad of the terrorist threat, Gates told CNN when asked about the Pakistan Army's operations against the Taliban in Buner and other areas around Swat valley."

"Taliban To Be Flushed Out Of Buner In a Week: Army" "The News" (05/04)

"In Charge Buner Operation Brig. Fayyaz Mahmood Qamar on Sunday said the ongoing military offensive in the troubled district will complete within a week."

"21, 'Would-Be Suicide Bombers' Killed In Buner: ISPR" "Dawn" (05/04)

"Military authorities claimed on Sunday to have killed about 80 militants, including a leader of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), during the ongoing military operation in Buner. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, three soldiers were also killed and eight others were injured.... The ISPR announced 21 'would-be suicide bombers' had been eliminated during the operation in Buner."

"Sufi's House In Lal Qila Hit By Shell" "Dawn" (05/04)

"The house of the Chief of Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi Maulana Sufi Mohammad - in the Lal Qila area of Maidan - was hit by shells fired by security personnel on Sunday evening, according to one of his sons."

"Swat Deal Is Dead, Says Muslim Khan" "The News" (05/04)

"Our peace agreement with the NWFP Government practically stands dissolved," confirmed Muslim Khan, spokesman for Swat chapter of the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), while talking to 'The News' via telephone."

"Taliban Slap 'Curfew,' Blow Up School" "Dawn" (05/04)

"Militants occupied shops and government buildings in Mingora and imposed curfew-like restrictions after troops captured a number of Taliban fighters. A state-run high school was blown up in the valley on Sunday, the first such action taken by the militants since February 16 when the NWFP Government and the Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Muhammadi signed a peace agreement."

"Missing Persons Under 'U.S. custody' In Pakistan, Says Munawar" "The News" (05/04)

"Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Ameer Syed Munawar Hassan has alleged that the PPP-led coalition government is pursuing the policies of former President Pervez Musharraf and that several Pakistani citizens are in the custody of U.S. agencies, which have set up jails in Pakistan, while talking to Defense of Human rights commission chairperson Amina Masood Janjua in Mansoor on Sunday."

"First ROZ to Be Set Up At Gadoon" "The Nation" (05/04)

"Pakistan-Afghanistan-specific Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) are soon to become a reality, as the Gadoon Amazai Industrial Estate in NWFP has been selected as principal site to launch the first phase of the U.S.-proposed program, well-placed government sources told 'The Nation' on Sunday."

Editorials/Op-eds

"More Clarity Needed," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"We hope Mr. Obama and his officials will send a clear signal that they support the democratic process in Pakistan.... If in fact U.S. officials have deliberately been sending mixed signals to the Pakistan government in recent weeks that must stop.... Moreover, two wrongs will not make a right. If the Pakistan government is guilty of not living up to the basic standards of governance and policymaking, the U.S. government has similarly failed to devise a credible policy towards Pakistan. Alternating between expressions of support and dissatisfaction is not good policy. It is a recipe for failure."

"Holbrooke's Twist," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (05/04)

"World is surprised that how can the sole global superpower keep on changing statements. Doesn't this reflect their dual policy? Contrary to U.S. President Obama, Mr. Holbrooke has issued a statement in President Zardari's support, while accusing media of misreporting. It is established now that the contradictory statements of the American officials are part of their strategy to create panic and uncertainty in Pakistan."

"Two-Pronged Policy Against Taliban," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/04)

"The state needs to pay heed to the relationship of coercion which the terrorist develops with the victim population on the basis of intimidation. The army therefore goes in among people who will not show loyalty to it in the initial phase. The logic of military action will succeed only if the army stays on and doesn't retreat from the theatre of war. It cannot allow the civilian government to negotiate with the terrorists in a military vacuum and then assume that it has given primacy to 'political solutions.'"

"Will Darul-Qaza Bring Peace Or More Mayhem?," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/04)

"It is the responsibility of the followers of TNSM and Taliban to surrender weapons, and refrain from indulging in such activities that can reinforce extremism and militancy. The national interests necessitate that the experiment of the Nizam-i-Adl must be made successful, and the perceptions of extremism and militancy should be removed to convince those elements who aren't ready to accept the Sharia laws as a universal remedy of all troubles."

"Announcement Of Darul-Qaza" an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (05/04)

"The TNSM must take religious scholars and parties on board, or else, it will be isolated from the mainstream society, and become an easy prey of the anti-Islam forces. There can be differences of opinion on the method of implementation of Shariat laws, but it should not be taken as conflict between Muslims and infidels."

"Commendable Decision Of Setting Up Darul-Qaza," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (05/04)

"With the announcement of establishment of Darul Qaza, the government has thrown the ball in the Taliban and Sufi Mohammad's court. Now it is their responsibility to reciprocate the government's sincere gesture by establishing peace in the area."

"After The Setting Up Of Darul Qaza: Joint Responsibility Of The Government And Sufi Muhammad," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/04)

"A delay in establishing the Darul Qaza would have deteriorated the situation further. Moreover, no government can give an individual or group the authority to appoint Qazis or judges.... Rejecting the Darul Qaza on minor technical grounds or trivial differences is not wise.... It is in the national interests that the government and TNSM make the deal successful through talks but sincerely remove each other's misgivings so that the bloodshed in Malakand can end."

"Establishment Of Darul Qaza: There Should Be Peace Now," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (05/04)

"The government has fulfilled its promise by setting up the Darul Qaza; it is now Sufi Muhammad's turn to fulfill his. He must now direct the TNSM to stop the Taliban from their activities. The ball is now in Sufi Muhammad's court. It is now his responsibility to restore peace in the area and make the Shariah system successful in Swat."

"Blowing Hot And Cold," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/04)

"President Obama might have succeeded in alarming the world about an imminent collapse of the civilian government, though there was little basis for making such an assumption, but at the same time he evoked strong resentment among Pakistanis. Many of them believe that the acquisition of Pakistan's nuclear assets was also on Washington's agenda, apart from dealing with the terrorist menace. President Obama's views were put down to pressure tactics for Islamabad to prove its credentials by taking stronger action against the militants.... It is a pity that the U.S. has failed to appreciate Islamabad's legitimate reservations about taking armed action against militants who are from among its own population."

"Statements Of Obama And Petraeus - Responsibilities Of Political And Military Leaders," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/02)

"Following President Obama's statement, President Zardari's visit to the United States has lost its significance and usefulness. Now the purpose of his visit is nothing but to meet and greet President Obama, and to concede new U.S. conditions with trivial assistance. However, President Zardari can make it clear to the U.S. administration that Pakistan isn't ready to accept the U.S. strings, and if the U.S. doesn't change its approach, Pakistan will quit the global war on terror."

"If We Face Threat From Within, We Can Find Strength from Within Too," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/02)

"Our leaders have done everything to claim the Afghan war (initiated by U.S.) as theirs, but the outcome of all these efforts is that President Obama has issued a charge-sheet against Pakistani government in his first most important address... We can also assume that the U.S. government is giving an indication of bringing back the old era of dictatorship by showing dissatisfaction with the efficacy of the present democratic setup. Views expressed by CENTCOM General Petraeus also show the gravity of the situation. President Obama's statement, that came a few days ahead of President Zardari's U.S. visit, is meant to lessen the importance of the visit, or is it an effort to mount pressure on Pakistan so that they may submit to

their unfair demands."

"Obama's Dissatisfaction Over Pakistani Government," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (05/02)

"U.S. President Obama has voiced concerns over weak Pakistani government and expressed hope to strengthen relations with the Pakistan Army. According to his views, Pakistan faces grave threats from within and not from India. On the other hand a U.S. newspaper has claimed that Obama administration has given a two-week deadline to the Pakistani government to streamline their policies and actions. It seems that the U.S. is facing difficulty in dealing with the incumbent government, and if it fails to rise to their expectations, then they will encourage the Pak Army to take charge of the government."

"U.S. Is Following 'Carrot And Stick' Policy," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (05/02)

"If we examine the statements issued by President Obama and other U.S. officials, we will know that they are doing this in a well-planned way. One day U.S. Secretary of State expresses concerns that the Pak nukes might fall in the hands of Taliban, and other day, U.S. President says that the nuclear arms are safe. We should not consider these mix signals as any naivety of the U.S. officials, or lack of communication, in fact, this is the carrot and stick policy used by Americans more often than not. One day they threaten Pakistani officials, and the other day, they use financial aids to tempt Pakistani officials to fulfill their strategic goals."

"Tough Talks," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/02)

"In an unusually candid set of comments, President Barack Obama has made it quite clear that his government has no faith in the Pakistani civilian government.... It is in some ways unfortunate though that the identification of Pakistan's key problems had to come from Washington.... The distance that has opened up in fact makes it possible for the U.S. to make attacks of the kind that has come from Obama. The President and his team will then need to persuade the big guns in Washington that they are indeed capable of meeting the needs of their beleaguered country and that what they need to achieve this is support. But the government must also realize that diminishing faith may mean there will be fewer chances in the future. There must then be no more failures, but only the success we need to move forward and eliminate the militancy that is today the biggest threat to our nation."

"Blow To The Government," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/02)

"With President Zardari due to arrive in Washington next week, the U.S. has piled on the pressure on the civilian government. On Wednesday, President Obama explicitly spelled out his concern.... It is clear that at the root of the American disquiet lies Pakistan's nuclear weapons and the possibility of them falling into the militants' hands."

"U.S. Apprehensions," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/02)

"President Obama's unusually strong indictment of the government presided over by President Zardari coincides with the latter's U.S. visit.... Coming as it does from President Obama, the observation would turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Despite concerns expressed earlier by his Administration regarding the Army for considering India the main enemy and thus ignoring the 'existential' threat posed by the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, President Obama pins more hope now on the (Pak) Army."

"A Needless Concern," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/02)

"The U.S. President Barack Obama's latest statement throws ample light on his administration's foreign policy in relation to

Pakistan.... It is now clear - constant and increased pressure, no matter who sits on the throne of the White House. Will showing lack of trust in the elected and democratic leadership of Pakistan resolve issues or further complicate them? Sadly, the latter possibility is the answer."

"U.S. Blows Hot And Cold," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/02)

"People of Pakistan are now used to contradictory statements emanating from Washington, the tone and tenor of which changes on almost daily basis. While some of the remarks made by the U.S. leadership and officials convey an impression of the United States taking genuine interest in Pakistan and its eagerness to provide some relief, at times a vivid message is relayed to people of Pakistan that Washington is pursuing an agenda to weaken the country. This perception was once again confirmed by comments made by President Barack Obama at a news conference in Washington on Wednesday.... In any case, it is absolutely clear that the U.S. establishment has its own agenda and that is nuclear free Pakistan. It is moving slowly and gradually towards that end."

"What Obama Will Not Hear From Zardari," an op-ed by Moazzam Husain in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"Now that the tide of Pakistani public opinion appears to be turning against the Taliban and as the military scores a series of successes, Pakistan needs to be given an enabling environment to follow this process through to its logical conclusion. The Obama administration and congressional policymakers may not hear this from President Zardari and the Pakistani delegation when they arrive in Washington this week. But policymakers in Washington would do well to approach policy formulation from the perspective of Pakistan's overall military doctrine as it has evolved after 1971."

"Holbrooke Remarks Only For Pak Consumption," a news analysis by Tariq Butt in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"President Barack Obama's razor-sharp description of the civilian government as fragile and picking holes in its different policies caused a storm in Pakistan's official, political and parliamentary circles who termed U.S. Presidential envoy Richard Holbrooke's subsequent damage-control statement, negating Obama's remarks, a salvage operation under Pakistani pressure, more an afterthought....

Obama's contentions were a huge slight and snub to President Asif Ali Zardari as it came less than a week before he pays an official visit to Washington and will have first ever face to face discussions with Obama.... Zardari's visit was made awfully worthless even before it materialized. Obama's drubbing reflected the weight and bearing that he attaches to Zardari as the President of Pakistan."

"Confusion At The Top And Frustration Below," an op-ed by Kamal Siddiqi in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"Something is very wrong in a society that eulogizes the Taliban and its leadership. Our people are being pushed into extremism and intolerance not only by religious parties but also supposedly 'saner' elements like people in our government, the media and in civil society.... There are many who argue that people have turned to extremism because of frustration with daily life. And this is a valid point. This frustration is being channelized by various forces. Here is where the government comes in and this is what President Obama is referring to. People in Pakistan are worried with the present state of affairs but there is no one who can give them hope."

"Obama Has Distorted Vision Of Pak-India Ties," an op-ed by M. Ashraf Mirza in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/04)

"Is Pakistan's perception of India as the mortal threat 'misguided' or President Obama's vision about South Asia especially the Pak-India relations is 'distorted'? It's the pertinent question that has arisen in the minds of many Pakistanis after Obama's

comment at his Press conference in Washington marking completion of his 100 days in office. His assertion that there is 'some recognition in Pakistan just in last few days that the obsession with India as the mortal threat to Pakistan has been misguided' is simply startling and doesn't represent the realities on the ground. It's not clear what has made the U.S. President to reach this conclusion since India is as hostile to Pakistan today as it was before."

"Pak-Afghan Coordination," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/04)

"Understandably, forces from some countries are not prepared to move beyond their peace-keeping duties such as relief and reconstruction, and take on a combat role in regions that are centers of Taliban activity. To come out of this situation, both the countries will have to strengthen their coordination to wipe out the menace of terrorism."

"The Medium Is The Message," an op-ed by Huma Yusuf in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"In the past few days, the U.S. government has made alarmist statements about ongoing military operations and the fragility of the Pakistan government. Shoot-from-the-hip comments make it easy for Pakistanis to discredit the American understanding of ground realities."

"Consequences Of Talibanization," an op-ed by Talat Masood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"If the fight against the Taliban is perceived by our people as an extension of our support for the Americans as some of our vernacular press, politicians and commentators would like us to believe, then there is no way that the military will be able to defeat them. Talibanization is the anti-thesis of Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan. If anyone is under the impression that the Taliban will bring in good governance, security and justice to the areas that they control he must be living in a world of fantasy."
Feierstein